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# LETTER

UPON THE

SUBJECT of TAXING

THE

ESTATES of ABSENTEES.

*N. Ireland Absentees*

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DUBLIN :

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L. E. T. E. R.

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STATES OF ABBEY

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Printed by J. M. H. & Co.

## A LETTER, &amp;c.

**I** HAVE read with the utmost Indignation several late Productions in the public Papers, which have been calculated to prejudice the Minds of the People against the most equitable of all Taxes, *viz.* a Tax upon the Estates of Absentees. Notwithstanding such a Tax has been always ardently wished for by every TRUE Friend of Ireland, yet as it was the general Opinion that it would be impracticable to obtain it, it was scarcely even hoped for by them ; but now, when it is supposed that such a Tax (if applied for by the unanimous Voice of the Parliament of *Ireland*,) would meet with the Approbation of his Majesty, that any Person who pretends to the Name of Patriot should be daring enough openly to shew himself inclined to oppose it, is to me a Matter of the greatest Astonishment. Let not, however, the honest and well-meaning Inhabitants of this neglected Country be deceived by the specious Arguments of such vain Pretenders to Patriotism, but let them thoroughly sift the Intenions of all these Declaimers, and I have no Doubt they will find that they are not actuated by the noble and generous Principle of promoting the Good of their Country, abstracted from partial Views, but that they are entirely swayed from private and interested Motives, and are probably only seeking to save from such a Tax the Estate of a Brother or a Nephew, or perhaps



their own Estates, having no Inclination to spend more of their Time in this Country, than may be sufficient to enable them to plunder it ; such a **PRETENDED** Friend is much more dangerous to the Community than an open Enemy : But I call upon every honest *Irishman* to be upon his Guard against the subtle Wiles and Artifices of such a Traitor to his Country. *Hic niger est ; hunc tu, Romane, caveto.*

Our Ancestors thought it just to take away from Absentees even their very Estates ; the Reasonableness of making any Person who has a Property in any Country, to contribute to the Support of that Property is so manifest, that it would be needless to attempt to prove it : Some People however object to the Mode of Taxation proposed, merely because it is a Land-Tax, though that is the only Tax that can affect our Absentees, and therefore they say it will open a Door for the taxing of the Lands of Residents ; but to such I answer, that as it is impossible for this Country to exist much longer in the present State of its Revenues without new Taxes, and as there is too much Reason to suppose, that in Case a War should break out a general Land-Tax would be attempted, most other Commodities being already taxed to the highest Pitch, the only Method that occurs to me of preventing a general Land-Tax, is, to tax the Lands of Absentees, which would gradually enable us in Times of Peace to reduce our National Debt, and in Time of War would contribute largely to support the Expences of that War, with the Addition of such **TEMPORARY** Taxes as might then be thought proper.



The Pretence that such a Tax would be destructive of natural Liberty is absurd, for on the other Hand, can it be expected that any Nation is quietly to permit the very Vitals by which it is supported, to be entirely drawn from it by its apostate Children, for the Purpose of squandering them away in another Country, and thereby be guilty of a Kind of Self-Murder, and that this must be the Case in a short Time with this unfortunate Country is most certain, unless some Method be found out to encrease the Export Trade thereof : For the great Rise of Lands of late Years has so encreased the Rents of our Absentees, that the Gross Sum remitted annually to them is more than the Balance in Favour of our Export Trade can bear, and must therefore soon drain us of all our Current Cash. But if the Estates of these Absentees have encreased in Value one Half more than they were thirty Years ago, (which I am confident is a moderate Calculation,) what Right can they have to complain should they be obliged to contribute one Tenth Part of their present nett Income, to prevent the Ruin of that Kingdom which has so long supplied them with the good Things of this Life, and which will thereby be enabled to continue to them the same Supply, though in a more moderate Degree ?

The Argument that we should thereby be deprived of the Assistance of many Friends at the other Side of the Water, by their being prevented from living entirely away from us, may easily be turned in Favour of this Tax, for can it be supposed that an intimate Knowledge of this Country and of its inhabitants, would disqualify any pre-  
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sent Friend of this Kingdom from doing us future Service on his Return to the Mother Country? Besides I am only anxious to tax the Total Absentees; for I should wish that every Nobleman and Gentleman that would condescend to spend even three Months in the Year in this Kingdom, should be absolutely excused from this Tax; and I have no Doubt but that this Intercourse among the principal Persons of both Kingdoms, would be productive of great Advantage to *Ireland*, and that many of our Noblemen and Gentlemen of large Property (who perhaps at present would have an horrid Idea of being obliged to live in this Country,) would in Time settle among us of their own Accord. And at any Rate, a Tax of Two Shillings in the Pound upon the nett Income of the Estates of the Total Absentees, after deducting all Charges whatsoever (which I should think sufficient) would be an annual Increase to this Kingdom of the tenth Part of the Cash that is now drained from it, under that Head, to effect which alone, exclusive of all other Considerations, would be a great National Acquisition.

Another Objection has been made, which I admit requires mature Deliberation, *viz.* the Difficulty of collecting this Tax; but shall we refuse a real and great Benefit, rather than submit to some small Inconveniencies?—Let the useless Board of Accounts be made Commissioners of the Absentee Land-Tax, and thereby render some Service to the Nation that pays them; or perhaps, if all Estates of Absentees under a 100*l.* a Year were excused from this Tax, (which I should think advisable) it might be managed in the following Manner:

As



As all Eftated Absentees must employ Agents to collect their Rents, let every Person be precluded from acting as Agent to the Estate of any Absentee, unless he shall first register his Name, &c. with the Collectors of the District, and shall also give Security to pay in half Yearly to such Collector, the tenth Part of the nett Produce of the Rents of any Estate to which he is Agent, after deducting all Charges whatsoever, a Rent-Roll of which, signed by him, must be lodged with such Collector; and let every Person that is Tenant to any Absentee, be empowered by a Clause in the Act, to refuse paying his Rent to any Agent that shall not be registered in Manner above-mentioned.

To the Absentee Nobleman and Gentleman that objects to these Regulations, a fair Answer may be always ready, “ You have it in your own Power  
“ to free yourselvs from these Inconveniencies, by  
“ living among us for even so short a Time as  
“ Three Months every Year.”

When I mention these Modes of Collection, I only want to induce wiser Heads to turn this Matter in their Thoughts, that they may also communicate their Sentiments to the Public: And let me hope that none of us are so lost to a Sense of Shame, as from interested Views to throw any Impediment to the Way of obtaining this great Object; an Object that in my opinion is of more Consequence in this Kingdom, than any Matter that was ever yet agitated in Parliament, and which would in a short Time render us a flourishing Nation, instead of being in the wretched State in which we are now plunged.

As I have the highest Opinion of our present excellent Chief Governor, I am confident he will give every Assistance in his Power to forward this Measure, and should a Tax upon the Estates of the Absentees of *Ireland* take Place during his Government, the Name of *HARCOURT* will be handed down with Glory and Honour to the latest Posterity.

A REAL LOVER OF HIS COUNTRY.

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